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Message Text

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TAGS:SHUM PFOR SO

SUBJECT:HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR CONGRESS

REF: STATE 228I9

I. UNLESS YOU PERCEIVE OBJECTION, PLEASE PASS FOLLOWING TO GOVERNMENT PER REFTEL.

ENGAGED IN AN UNDECLARED WAR WITH ETHIOPIA AND FACED WITH THE PROCLAIMED TASK OF BRINGING ABOUT A SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION IN SOMALIA'S SOCIETY, THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT HAS TENDED TO SUBORDINATE INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES TO ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC GOALS, PARTICU-
LARLY THAT OF BRINGING ABOUT A MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBU-
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TION OF SOMALIA'S LIMITED MATERIAL RESOURCES. THE GOVERNMENT PRIDES ITSELF ON THE RELATIVE LACK OF COERCION WHICH HAS BEEN REQUIRED. WITH THE DEPARTURE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF SOVIET CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ADVISORS, IT IS LIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE SOME LIBERAL-
IZATION, OVER TIME, IN THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT'S ATTI-
TUDE TOWARD INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS.

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I. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORTURE

WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT TORTURE IS PRACTICED IN THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

NOR HAVE ANY INSTANCES OF CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT BEEN REPORTED TO US.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT

ARBITRARY ARRESTS, DETENTION, AND IMPRISONMENT HAVE BEEN USED AGAINST SUSPECTED POLITICAL DISSIDENTS IN SOMALIA. EXCEPT IN UNUSUAL CASES, PRISON SENTENCES ARE SHORT. MANY OF THE OFFICIALS WHO HELD OFFICE UNDER THE PREVIOUS REGIME AND WHO WERE DETAINED FOLLOWING PRESIDENT SIAD'S SUCCESSION TO POWER HAVE SINCE BEEN APPOINTED TO POSIT-IONS OF TRUST AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GOVERNMENT

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL
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POLITICAL DISSIDENTS ARE NOT ALWAYS ACCORDED A PUBLIC TRIAL. IN JANUARY I975, AND AS AN EXCEPTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REHABILITATION RATHER THAN EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT, TEN SOMALI RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE EXECUTED FOR THEIR PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO ITS DECISION TO ACCORD EQUAL RIGHTS TO SOMALI WOMEN. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS DID NOT RECEIVE A PUBLIC TRIAL.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

POLITICAL DISSIDENTS PROBABLY ARE NOT FREE FROM ARBITRARY SEARCHES OF THEIR HOMES.

2. GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION:

WITHIN ITS ABILITY TO DO SO, THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING A SERIOUS EFFORT TO FULFILL THE VITAL NEEDS OF THE POPUL-ACE. THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT TAKES A SERIOUS INTEREST IN

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THE PROBLEM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CURRENT PER CAPITA INCOME IS DOLS 100). WHILE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS APPROACH IS CONSTRAINED BY SOCIALISM WHICH DISCOURAGES MUCH FOREIGN INVESTMENT, IT HAS ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS OF

DIRECT BENEFIT TO THE SOMALI PEOPLE. A MAJOR EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE, FOR EXAMPLE, TO RESETTLE NOMADIC TRIBESMEN WHOSE HERDS WERE KILLED OFF BY THE RECENT DROUGHT. THE EFFORT TO TURN MANY OF THESE PEOPLE INTO FARMERS AND FISHERMEN MAY NOT SUCCEED, BUT IT REPRESENTS A CLEAR COMMITMENT IN TALENT AND RESOURCES ON THE PART OF THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT TO AMELIORATE THE CONDITION OF THE POOR.

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WE HAVE NO GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING THAT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES HAVE BEEN DIVERTED THROUGH CORRUPTION TOWARD THE NATION'S ELITE AND AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION.

3. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION, AND ASSEMBLY

IN THE PURSUIT OF ITS OBJECTIVES THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN LITTLE TOLERANCE FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH OR ASSEMBLY. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS IMPAIRED BY GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND CENSORSHIP. THERE DOES NOT APPEAR, HOWEVER, TO BE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY, EXCEPT WHERE THESE ACTIVITIES ENCROACH ON THE PUBLIC POLITICAL ARENA.

THE SOMALIS ARE A MUSLIM PEOPLE AND ARE ALLOWED TO PRACTICE THEIR FAITH FREELY SO LONG AS THEIR RELIGIOUS LEADERS DO NOT CHALLENGE THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OR LEGITIMACY OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE PUBLIC OPPOSITION OF THE TEN EXECUTED RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN I975 WAS BASED ON THEOLOGICAL AS WELL AS ON POLITICAL GROUNDS SINCE THEY BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT, IN REVISING THE INHERITANCE LAWS, HAD ATTACKED THE KORAN, THE BASIS FOR ISLAMIC DIVORCE AND INHERITANCE RIGHTS. THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, VIEWED THE PROTEST IN POLITICAL TERMS AND CHARGED THE LEADERS WITH OPPOSING ITS DECISION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND PREACHING THE ISLAMIC FAITH FALSELY. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO CHARGED THAT THE LEADERS WERE IN THE PAY OF A FOREIGN POWER.

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B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION

THE SOMALIS, BEING A NOMADIC PEOPLE, GENERALLY HAVE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY. SUCH

FREEDOM IS SOMETIMES CURTAILED, HOWEVER, IN THE CASE OF SUSPECTED OR KNOWN DISSIDENTS, AND WHERE THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT SUCH MOVEMENT IS NOT IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST. FREEDOM TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY OR CHANGE PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT IS SOMETIMES DENIED FOR THE SAME REASONS.

C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PRESS

SOMALIA IS A ONE-PARTY STATE WHICH IS RULED PRIMARILY BY MILITARY OFFICERS WHO SEIZED POWER IN OCTOBER I969. IN PURSUIT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GOALS, THE LEADERSHIP HAS IMPOSED A HIGH DEGREE OF POLITICAL REGIMENTATION. NO OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE PERMITTED TO EXIST.

4. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTER-NATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED FOREIGN REPORTERS FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT HAS NOT SO FAR BEEN DISPOSED TO PERMIT OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. IN I975, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) WISHED TO SEND A MISSION TO DISCUSS THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT, BUT AI'S REQUEST WAS REJECTED ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE SOMALI AUTHORITIES WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE RESETTLEMENT OF PERSONS AFFLICTED BY THE DROUGHT. VANCE

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TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, SO
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